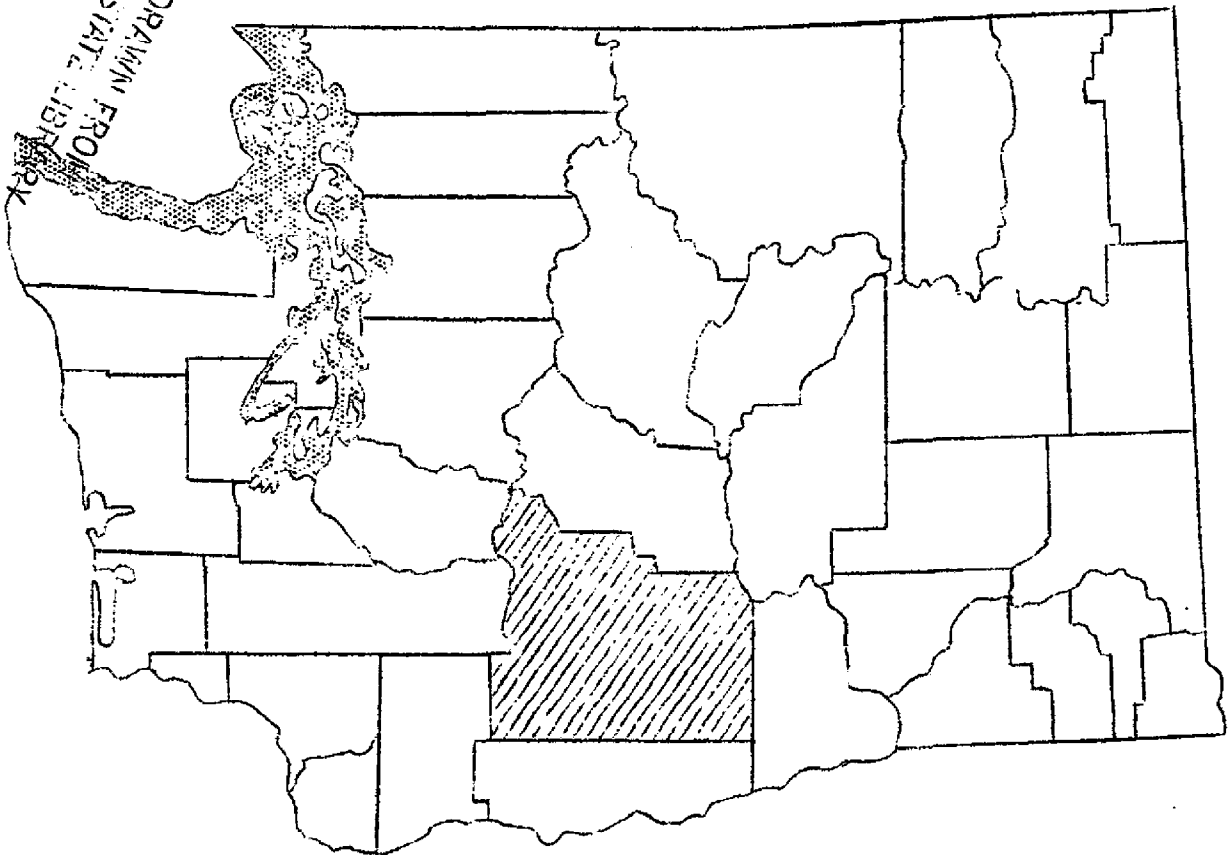


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YAKIMA COUNTY AGRICULTURE

WASHINGTON

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
1964



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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FOREWORD

This bulletin on Yakima County is one of a second edition series devoted to presenting the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. The original series was initiated in 1956 by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. State funds were matched by moneys from the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals especially in the field of marketing agricultural products. Knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Yakima County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by social studies teachers. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area.

Selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Yakima County. Enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1870 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Yakima County in 1865. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forest which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgment is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Field Operations Division, Statistical Reporting Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Research involved in up-dating and revising the original information and writing the first draft of the second edition of the Yakima County bulletin was performed by Cecil Ouellette, former Market Analyst with the Washington State Department of Agriculture. George Saito, Research Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture, edited and supervised the preparation of the final manuscript of the bulletin. Valuable assistance was extended to the above-mentioned personnel by staff members of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service. Margaret Quiroga, Washington State Department of Agriculture, typed all of the textual and tabular material and prepared the graphs.

J. D. Dwyer, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Olympia, Washington
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PART I

HISTORY OF YAKIMA COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Introduction

Yakima County, a state and national leader in several farm products, is located in south-central Washington. Named after the Yakima Indians, whose large reservation covers nearly half the area, the county lies partly in the Cascade Range and partly in upfolded ridges and a broad, irrigated valley of the Columbia Plateau. Agriculture over the county is greatly diversified but numerous farms of various sizes and types lend themselves to specialization in a few crops depending on their location, soil and terrain.

With an area of 4,286 square miles, approximately 2,743,040 acres, Yakima is the second largest county in the state. According to the 1959 Census of Agriculture, nearly 69 percent of the area was in farms and about 10 percent or 281,008 acres was in harvested cropland or in orchards. Large areas are in forest and range lands unsuited for crops but important for grazing. The economic history of Yakima County is mainly characterized by a rapid change-over from livestock farming to a diversified agriculture on irrigated lands brought into production since 1892. Dry climate and Indian hostility hindered early settlement and not until after 1858 did any appreciable agriculture get started. Large-scale development did not commence until the completion of the first irrigation canals by private enterprise in 1872. By 1959 almost one-half of all income by Yakima County residents was derived directly from agriculture.

History 1/

The Yakima Indians, a Sahaptin language-speaking group, occupied the river valley, the watershed and other areas in the county prior to the coming of the white men. They were semi-nomadic horsemen, wintering in village camps along the Yakima and Columbia Rivers and traveling widely on summer hunting and berry and root gathering trips into the forested Cascade Mountains. Their first contacts with white men were with the trappers and traders of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company along the Columbia between 1810 and 1835. The name, Yakima, is from the Indian word "Eyakima" meaning "well-fed people". Yakimas under Chief Kamiakin received Roman Catholic missionaries during 1852-53 and they helped the priests construct

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the Ahtanum Mission in the upper Yakima Valley. Father Charles Pandosy introduced agriculture and irrigation at Ahtanum and the Indians became the first farmers in the Valley.

The Yakimas led the confederacy of fourteen eastern Washington tribes in the war against American settlers in Washington Territory during 1855-58. The Yakimas and Klickitats defeated the U. S. Cavalry under Major G. O. Haller near Fort Simcoe in August 1855. In the winter of 1855-56, they crossed the Cascades and made attacks on the White River Valley and the village of Seattle. The Indian warfare virtually stopped white settlement in most of eastern Washington. The U. S. Army established a strong fort and garrison at Fort Simcoe in the summer of 1856. General Gabriel J. Rains and 700 troopers invaded the Yakima Valley in 1856 and dispersed Chief Kamiakin and his warriors. By order of the U. S. War Department, eastern Washington was closed to settlement at this time.

An Indian treaty concluded at Fort Walla Walla, June 9, 1855, between Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens and the Yakimas and other interior Indians was finally ratified by Congress March 8, 1859, ending the Indian War. Tribes of the Yakima Confederacy accepted the terms of the 1855 treaty which established tribal reservations. The Yakima Reservation included 1,216,000 acres. By 1865, the Yakimas were residing peaceably on the reservation and other valley lands outside its borders were being settled by whites.

The first white agricultural settlers were cattlemen who moved their herds into the Yakima Valley from the Klickitat and Walla Walla Valleys and other areas in southeastern Washington. In 1860, ranchers were driving cattle northward through the Yakima, Wenatchee and Okanogan Valleys to the mining fields in British Columbia. Fielding M. Thorpe was one of the first settlers, taking a donation land claim at the mouth of the Moxee Valley in 1861. Thorpe brought in 250 head of Durham cattle and some horses. Livestock raising continued as the primary activity into the 1880's. Many cattle were driven through the Cascades over Snoqualmie and Naches Passes to Seattle.

By 1864 there were about 200 settlers in the Yakima Valley and they petitioned for a county government. On January 21, 1865 the Washington Territorial Legislature created Yakima County out of the northwest portion of the older Walla Walla County. The city of Yakima became the county seat. The first Census of the county in 1870 enumerated a resident population of only 432. It

1/ This historical and geographical summary has been derived from five sources:

- (1) Highsmith, Richard M. "Irrigation Agriculture in the Yakima Valley", M.A. Thesis, geography, University of Washington, 1946.
- (2) Highsmith, Richard M., and Miller, Elbert E. "Open Field Farming in the Yakima Valley, Washington", Economic Geography, January 1952.
- (3) Orr, Alder E. Economic Conditions and Problems of Agriculture in the Yakima Valley, Washington, State College of Washington, Agric. Exp. Station, Pullman, Washington. Six bulletins in series, July 1939-June 1943.
- (4) Federal Writers Project, Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State, Washington State Historical Society, publishers, 1941, pp. 299-304, 463-471.
- (5) Perry, Richard M. "The Counties of Washington", published by Secretary of State, Olympia, Washington. (Mimeographed) 1943.

was increased by new settlers to 2,811 in 1880. This population included the entire Yakima River drainage, from which Kittitas County was formed in 1883 and Benton County in 1905, leaving Yakima with its present boundaries.

Early settlers who experimented with irrigation agriculture and fruit growing, and who also introduced livestock, made important contributions to the area's agricultural history. The Catholic missionaries had taught Chief Kamiakin of the Yakima Indians the value of irrigation at the Ahtanum Mission near Wapato in 1853, the first known attempt at irrigation agriculture in the valley. In 1867 and 1868, George Nelson and others started diverting water from the Naches River. By 1870 there were 1,000 acres under irrigation. In 1872, Sebastian Lauber and Joseph and Charles Schanno started irrigation fields near Yakima. John W. Beck is credited with introducing apple and pear growing with his planting of 100 trees at Yakima in 1870. Augustan Cleman, for whom Cleman Mountain is named, drove the first sheep into the valley along the Wenas Creek in 1865.

An important turning point in agricultural history occurred during 1886-88 when the Northern Pacific Railroad's transcontinental line reached Yakima. It was extended over the Cascades to Puget Sound and larger markets for both livestock and crops were opened to Yakima Valley farmers. Owning considerable railroad land grant acreage in the valley, the Northern Pacific Railroad and other sources of private capital undertook large investments in irrigation in order to attract settlers. The railroad also encouraged a rapid expansion in export of numerous crops. In 1890 the Sunnyside Canal was started to divert water from the Yakima River. Forty-two miles of canal were completed and settlement was under way in the Sunnyside and Grandview districts by 1892. The Washington Irrigation Company took over management of the Sunnyside Canal in 1900. Several other canals were constructed by private capital in the decade from 1890 to 1900. The Congdon and Selah Canals were completed in 1894 to irrigate benchlands around Yakima which were planted largely in orchards. The Selah-Moxee Canal brought water to the Moxee district.

By 1900 the Yakima Valley contained the largest irrigated acreage in Washington. Farming was diversified among several field and tree crops and livestock. Old towns of the valley grew and new ones were being founded. Population had nearly tripled since 1890, reaching 13,462 in 1900. Under the influence of Federal irrigation projects and rapid settlement of the irrigated lands, population tripled again in the 1900-1910 period, reaching 41,709 even though Benton County had been formed from part of the county in 1906.

The Reclamation Act of 1902, which made federal funds available for development of irrigation projects, brought another turning point in the county's economy. Irrigation by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Office of Indian Affairs, starting in 1905 and continuing until 1948, created a total of 270,850 acres of irrigated land.

The Bureau of Reclamation's master plan for the valley, the Yakima Project, called for three divisions--Sunnyside, Tieton and Roza. The Sunnyside Division was purchased from the Washington Irrigation Company in 1905 and was expanded to its present area of 102,000 acres in the lower Yakima Valley, including part of Benton County. The Tieton Division of the upper Yakima drainage was completed in 1920. It included 29,800 acres mainly planted in apples and other tree fruits. The Roza Division was started in 1935 to irrigate benchlands of the lower Yakima Valley. It was completed in 1948, adding about 72,000 acres of cropland. In

1913, the Federal Office of Indian Affairs, in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation, started the Indian Irrigation Project, or the Wapato Division, on the Yakima Reservation. About 90,000 acres were put under irrigation in the Wapato and Toppenish districts with an ultimate acreage over 120,000 acres.

From 1920 to 1950 Yakima County's population and employment grew steadily on a foundation of highly productive land. Marketing outlets expanded as railroads and highways were improved over the Cascades. The increase in farming and marketing and in numerous fields of service employment attracted large numbers of settlers from other states and European countries as well as migratory workers. Population jumped from 41,709 in 1910 to 145,112 in 1960.

In 1959, there were 5,804 irrigated farms in Yakima County out of a total of 6,010 farms. There were 296,793 acres under irrigation, the largest irrigated area in the state. With the development of irrigation, Yakima has become the foremost agricultural region in Washington. In 1959, it was the leading county in the state in value of farm products sold, which amounted to \$108,679,743 during the year. It ranks first in Washington in production of tree fruits, grapes, sugar beets, vegetables, cattle, sheep and turkeys. Yakima also ranks first locally and nationally in the production of apples, hops and mint.

Expanding agricultural production brought with it marketing facilities. Early packers and shippers tended to build along the railroad lines to take advantage of the then most important mode of transportation. Out of this grew "Produce Row", a concentration of fruit shippers served by the Northern Pacific and Union Pacific railroads in downtown Yakima. Later shippers have tended to locate where parking facilities permit easier intake of products and easy loading of trucks. Warehouses and packing sheds are now well distributed throughout the major farm areas of the county.

Many concerns and growers' associations have promoted the agriculture of the county to national prominence. Public agencies which have influenced Yakima Valley farming through research in horticultural science include the Tree Fruit Experiment Station at Wenatchee and the Irrigation Experiment Station at Prosser, both directed by Washington State University. Associations of growers and processors important in Yakima development include the Washington State Horticultural Association, Washington State Fruit Commission, Yakima Fruit Growers Association, Yakima County Cattlemen's Association, the Wool Growers Association, the Hop Growers of Washington, the Yakima County Horticultural Union and the Yakima Dairymen's Association.

Large investments in food processing plants have been an important influence in the development of agriculture in the Yakima Valley. There are plants for canning, freezing, dehydrating, juicing and concentrating of fruits, vegetables and berries. The largest concentration of these plants is in the City of Yakima. Important processing operations are also located in or near Prosser, Sunnyside, Grandview, Toppenish and Selah.